

Crediting Juice for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) meal patterns for preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. The SSO follows the NSLP and SBP preschool meal patterns. The requirements for the preschool meal patterns are the same as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and are defined by the USDA’s final rule, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*.

For information on the preschool meal patterns and crediting foods, refer to the CSDE’s guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP*, and visit the “Grains Component for Preschoolers” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Full-strength fruit juice credits as the fruits components and full-strength vegetable juice credits as the vegetables component in the preschool meal patterns. Juice served to preschoolers must be pasteurized full-strength 100 percent fruit juice, vegetable juice, or a combination of fruit and vegetable juices. The name of the full-strength fruit juice on the label must include one of the following terms: “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “100 percent juice,” “reconstituted juice,” or “juice from concentrate.” The statements “natural” and “organic” do not indicate that a juice is full strength.

Juice products that are less than full strength, or that contain juice concentrates that are not fully reconstituted, do not credit in preschool meals and ASP snacks. Except for smoothies, juice cannot credit when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage (see “[Crediting Pureed Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies](#)” in this document).

The USDA recommends serving whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) more often than juice. Juice does not provide the same nutritional benefits as whole fruits and vegetables, which contain fiber, fewer calories, and more nutrients.



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Crediting Juice Concentrates

Juice concentrates credit only when they are reconstituted with water to 100 percent full-strength juice and served in the form of juice. Juice concentrates do not credit when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage product, such as gelatin or sherbet made with juice concentrates.

Juice made from concentrate is reconstituted with a volume of water that is several times the amount of the juice concentrate. A typical reconstitution ratio might be three parts water to one part concentrate, but this ratio may vary for different juice products. Commercial juice products made from concentrate will list “water” as the first ingredient followed by the type of juice concentrate, for example, “water, orange juice concentrate” and “filtered water, grape juice concentrate.” Juice made from concentrate that is labeled “100 percent juice” credits when the school food authority (SFA) follows the manufacturer’s specific instructions for reconstituting.

Crediting Juice Blends

Juice blends credit if they are a combination of full-strength fruit juices, full-strength vegetable juices, or full-strength fruit and vegetable juices. Crediting is based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product contributes to the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product contributes to the vegetables component. For example, the product below credits toward the vegetables component because the first ingredient is a vegetable juice blend.

- Ingredients: *Reconstituted vegetable juice blend (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots)*, reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

Crediting Frozen Juice Products

Frozen fruit juice (such as full-strength frozen juice pops) credits based on the fluid volume prior to freezing. SFAs must request a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer to document this information. Frozen fruit juice counts toward the preschool juice limit (see “[Juice Limit](#)” in this document).

For information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE’s resources, *Product Formulation Statements*, and *Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP*; and the USDA’s PFS form, *Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits*. For additional guidance, visit the “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Crediting Apple Cider

Apple cider credits as the fruits component if it is pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Pasteurized juice has been heat-treated to kill harmful bacteria. Check labels, as some brands of apple cider are not pasteurized. SFAs cannot serve apple cider (or any other type of juice) that is not pasteurized. Apple cider must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the preschool juice limit (see “[Juice Limit](#)” in this document).

Crediting Coconut Water

Fruit juices labeled as 100 percent juice, including coconut water, credit toward the fruits component based on the volume served. Coconut water is subject must meet the same requirements as juice and counts toward the preschool juice limit (see “[Juice Limit](#)” in this document).

Crediting Pureed Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies

Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice in the preschool meal patterns. Crediting is based on the volume (cups) of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving. For example, a smoothie that contains $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of pureed strawberries credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit juice. Pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies count toward the preschool juice limit (see “[Juice Limit](#)” in this document).

Concentrated fruit puree and concentrated juice are added sugars. They do not credit as juice unless they are reconstituted to full-strength fruit puree or full-strength juice.

School food authorities (SFAs) must document the amount of pureed fruits and vegetables per serving with a standardized recipe for smoothies made on site. Commercial products require a PFS (or a CN label, if available, for fruit and vegetable smoothies that also contain yogurt). For information on standardized recipes, PFS forms, and CN labels, visit the “[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch in Preschool Menus](#)” and “[Crediting Commercial Processed Products in Preschool Menus](#)” sections of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The CSDE’s resource, [Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#), summarizes the requirements for crediting smoothies in preschool meals and ASP snacks.



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Crediting Juice in Canned Fruit

A serving of canned fruit may include the 100 percent juice in which the fruit is packed but cannot include water or syrup. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches with juice credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. However, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned peaches with syrup does not credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component because the serving does not contain $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit. The menu planner can credit only the amount of peaches without the syrup.

The juice from canned fruit counts toward the juice limit if the menu planner credits the juice toward the fruits component. For example, if canned pears in juice credit as the fruits component at lunch, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or the vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that same day.

Juice from canned fruit does not count toward the juice limit if the juice is planned as an extra noncreditable food. An example is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of canned fruit portioned in a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce container with the juice added after measuring the full $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit.

Juice Ingredients

Juice ingredients may vary among manufacturers. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) labeling regulations allow 100 percent juice to contain added ingredients and still be labeled "100% juice." Some 100 percent juices contain added ingredients such as artificial flavors, artificial colors (e.g., red 40, blue 1, yellow 5 and 6, and titanium dioxide), preservatives (e.g., sodium potassium sorbate), flavor enhancers (e.g., ethyl maltol), and emulsifiers or thickeners (e.g., glycerol esters of wood rosin and xanthan gum). The CSDE encourages menu planners to read the product's ingredients statement and choose 100 percent juices without these added ingredients.

Juice Limit

Full-strength juice credits as either the vegetables component or the fruits component at only one preschool meal or ASP snack per day. Menu planners must count all sources of 100 percent juice toward the juice limit, including:

- 100 percent juice (fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate) (see "[Crediting Juice Concentrates](#)" in this document);
- frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice (see "[Crediting Frozen Juice Products](#)" in this document);
- pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies (see "[Crediting Pureed Fruits and Vegetables in Smoothies](#)" in this document); and



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- juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice (see “[Crediting Juice in Canned Fruit](#)” in this document).

If a preschool meal or ASP snack includes any type of juice as the fruits component or vegetables component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at any other preschool meal or ASP snack that same day.

The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- Lunch cannot contain a smoothie and juice as the only servings of the fruits component and vegetables component. For example, the lunch menu cannot offer a strawberry smoothie as the fruits component and vegetable juice as the vegetables component because both credit as juice.
- If the breakfast menu includes juice as the fruits component, canned fruit in juice cannot credit as the fruits component at lunch or ASP snack.
- If the lunch menu includes a frozen 100 percent fruit juice pop as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or ASP snack.
- If the ASP snack menu includes a smoothie made with pureed peaches as the fruits component, juice cannot credit as the fruits component or vegetables component at breakfast or lunch.

Juice in the ASP

The ASP preschool meal pattern requires two of the five food components (milk; meat/meat alternates; vegetables; fruits; and grains). A reimbursable snack could include:

- a serving of vegetable and a serving of fruit;
- a serving of vegetable and a serving of fruit juice; or
- a serving of fruit and a serving of vegetable juice.

A reimbursable snack cannot include a serving of vegetable juice (including pureed vegetables in smoothies) and a serving of fruit juice (including pureed fruits in smoothies, juice in canned fruit, and frozen juice pops) as the only two snack components. For example, a snack that contains a vegetable smoothie and apple juice is not reimbursable because both components credit as juice. In addition, juice cannot be served when milk is the only other snack component.

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The USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends serving a variety of fruits and choosing whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice; and serving a fruit or vegetable as at least one of the two required snack components. For guidance on serving and crediting fruits and vegetables in preschool meals and ASP snacks, visit the “[Fruits Component for Preschoolers](#)” and “[Vegetables Component for Preschoolers](#)” sections of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Offering Juice as an Extra Menu Item

SFAs may choose to offer juice as an extra menu item that does not count toward the preschool meal patterns. However, the USDA encourages SFAs to limit juice in preschool menus to ensure that meals and ASP snacks meet children's nutrition needs. Preschoolers might not consume the actual meal components if the menu includes noncreditable foods. In addition, SFAs must consider the cost issues of providing noncreditable foods.

Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Accepting_Proccsed_Product_Documentation_SNP.pdf

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASP_Handbook.pdf

CACFP Best Practices (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP_factBP.pdf

Crediting Smoothies for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP:

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_preschool.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Fruits Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Fruits>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage)

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

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Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/Menu_Planning_Guide_Preschool.pdf

Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Vegetables and Fruits in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, and NSLP Afterschool Snacks (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Veg_Subgroups_Fruits_Fillable_508.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/ResourcesPreschoolMealPattern.pdf>

USDA Memo CACFP 25-2016: Vegetable and Fruit Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/vegetable-and-fruit-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program-questions-and-answers>

USDA Memo SP 40-2019, CACFP 17-2019 and SFSP 17-2019: Smoothies Offered in Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/smoothies-offered-child-nutrition-programs>

Vegetable Subgroups in the CACFP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Vegetable_Subgroups_CACFP.pdf

Vegetables Component and Fruits Component for Preschoolers in the ASP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/VFcomponentsASP_preschool.pdf

Vegetables Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#Vegetables>

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For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP* and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_preschool.pdf.

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